

Hon. Tim Bishop
H.R. 569
March 7, 2007

Mr. Speaker,

I want to thank you my colleague from New Jersey for introducing this important legislation, and I commend Chairman Oberstar of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee for his leadership in moving this bill to the Floor.

This bill is extremely important to my district, which is surrounded by water on three sides. Each year, many of my constituents – and millions of other Americans – are sickened by swimming in water contaminated by sewer overflows. This inadequately treated sewage is filled with bacteria, viruses, parasites, and worms.

Also, the cumulative costs of discharges from sewer systems result in thousands of days of closed beaches and a cost of billions billion of dollars due to swimming-related illnesses. The impact of such contamination to my district, with over 300 miles of coastline, can be devastating to the fishing and tourist economies that depend upon clean water and healthy beaches.

According to the EPA, an estimated 850 billion gallons of raw sewage and industrial waste escape each year, much of it into public waters.

Unfortunately, in FY 2008, the President cut water quality infrastructure funding. He recommended the State Revolving fund be cut by 36.6 percent or \$400 million this year.

And yet many Americans do not become aware of sewage leaks until they show up to a closed beach— or worse yet are made ill— because many sewer systems do not routinely monitor to detect sewer overflows or report those that do occur to environmental or public health agencies.

This bill authorizes \$1.8 billion over the next five years for grants to these prevent dangerous sewer overflows. More needs to be done, but this is a good first step. Vote for this bill, protect the health of our nation's beach-goers, protect our environment.

I yield back the balance of my time.